

BINA SHAH Anti Semitic Charge

Against Foreign Minister of Pakistan Dawn May 26 2021

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The writer **BINA SHAH** is author of *Before She Sleeps* and many other books.

FOREIGN Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was recently interviewed by CNN anchor Bianna Golodryga on 'Amanpour' after the UN meeting on the latest Israel-Palestine emergency. In Pakistan, this interview sparked a vigorous debate about whether or not the foreign

minister had been antisemitic in his remarks. What exactly did he say that was so wrong?

During the brief interview, in which the foreign minister appeared jet-lagged, but resolute, Qureshi spoke about the need for Israel to stop its aggression. Then he said Israel was losing the media war in the eyes of the world. Golodryga asked him what he meant by that; he responded that Israel had "connections" to the media and then changed that to "they control the media". When Golodryga pushed back, he added, "Deep pockets." Immediately, Golodryga accused SMQ of antisemitism. After her accusation, our foreign minister spent the rest of the interview trying to extricate himself.

Read: ['Anti-Semitic' remark or Western media's hypocrisy? — FM Qureshi's CNN interview sparks debate](#)

To Pakistanis, it may not be illogical to point out that Israel has a great deal of influence on the world media. A 2018 study by 416labs.com showed that in five major US newspapers, headlines mentioning Israel were four times more prevalent than those mentioning Palestine; Israeli sources are 250 per cent more likely to be quoted than Palestinian sources. But

it is highly unlikely that Israel is directly paying for this disproportionate coverage.

Unfortunately, to Jewish people, suggesting that Jews — or Israelis — control the media, banking or Hollywood counts as antisemitism, as does active Jew-hatred and comparing Jews to Nazis. Antisemitism is not religious prejudice, but classified as racism and ethnic hatred. Legitimate criticism of Israel is not antisemitism, according to many Jews who oppose Israel's policies towards Palestinians. Other Jews argue that even Jews who criticise Israel are antisemitic.

How does the West define antisemitism?

Many Pakistanis do not give proper consideration to what it means to be accused of antisemitism in the West. Yes, it has been weaponised in order to silence people on the subject of the Palestinian occupation. But like the issue of blasphemy, an accusation of antisemitism can ruin your professional standing, if not your life. Although nobody has died after being accused of being antisemitic, you can lose your job as a reporter, or be denied tenure at a university. If you're a politician accused of antisemitism, your political career may never recover.

Golodryga, who misnamed Qureshi as ambassador twice instead of foreign minister, could be blamed for using a variety of methods to shut him down on the issue of Israel and Palestine. As well as the antisemitism accusation, she also questioned Qureshi on Pakistan's silence on China's Uighurs. While it may be reasonable that Pakistan be questioned on its support for Palestine but its silence on human rights violations in China, Qureshi should have insisted that she stick to the relevant topic and that that discussion could take place at another time.

Rather than alluding to unsupported conspiracy theories on WhatsApp groups and social media, he should have merely stated that media bias in favour of Israel cannot change the fact that Israel is in violation of international law and committing war crimes in its continued occupation of Palestine. Our political representatives, instead of trying to expose a worldwide Zionist plot, must educate themselves on what constitutes antisemitism in the international arena and be utterly scrupulous about leaving it all out of any public discourse.

Recent tweets from a Pakistani actress and a freelance reporter (who was then fired from CNN) misquoting Hitler were retweeted by many Israel supporters as

'evidence' that Pakistan is a deeply antisemitic country. Once the word 'antisemitism' is mentioned, all our credibility as honest brokers goes out the window in the eyes of the West, especially as we are a Muslim country. This label would take away our ability to use our voice in international forums to advocate for causes like Palestine and Kashmir; an antisemitic nation with nuclear capabilities would not just be vilified but restricted on many levels. At the very least, it could have negative repercussions for our attempts to get off the FATF grey list.

Even the Palestinians who are grateful for our support have said that antisemitism does not help them get out of the living nightmare they're in. In a world that is changing the discourse about the Israeli-Palestine conflict, thanks to social media and the amplification of Palestinian voices, this is not the right time for Pakistanis to revert to what are widely seen as antisemitic tropes and stereotypes. Our spokespeople need intensive media coaching on how to avoid them while still making valid points on international media and at world fora. This will elevate the dialogue around peace and justice to the benefit of the Palestinians and improve Pakistan's standing in the eyes of the world.

The writer is author of Before She Sleeps.

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The Foreign Minister did not utter anything anti-semitic. One can see clearly from the video of the interview that the anchorperson Bianna was rattled from the beginning; she even called FM Qureshi an ambassador.

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Ahsan Iqbal

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I wonder which part of the interview was anti-semitic? People need to understand that criticizing Israel is not equivalent to criticizing the whole Jews community.

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Status quo needs to change and it will!!! If you can't be part of a solution don't be part of a problem

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